

12 MSP Mine Ban Convention  
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Statement on Victim assistance by Norway

Check against delivery

Mr President

There has been considerable decline in the number of new victims of anti-personnel mines over the past decade and the reasons for this is both positive and simple. The Convention works, States parties comply with their obligations, and states not party overwhelmingly respects its core obligations. States parties and others have stopped using antipersonellmines, they have stopped producing and transferring them, millions of stockpiled mines have been destroyed before ever being deployed, and large mined areas have been cleared and released. Bit we still face significant challenges within Victim Assistance.

All elements of the convention gravitate around the victims; preventing new victims and assisting existing victims and survivors. Compliance with the obligations in the Mine ban Convention is the only way of achieving its humanitarian objectives.

The mine ban convention strengthened international law by establishing a new legal norm for victim assistance. Since then, two new instruments have moved our understanding of victims and survivors assistance forward.

First, and perhaps most significant, the Convention on the rights of Persons with disabilities, takes a rights based, inclusive and non-discriminatory approach. As we heard so eloquently presented yesterday by the High Commissioner for Human rights, Ms Navi Pillay, the CRPD is highly relevant for structuring and implementing victim assistance in the context of the Mine Ban convention on several areas.

Second, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has given victim assistance an even more prominent place, with stronger obligations and a broader definition of victims. Both of these important developments in international law reflect lessons learned in the implementation of the mine ban convention.

The co-existence of these different legal frameworks enhances the implementation of all three conventions, and Norway will work for increased use of potential synergies and mutually reinforcing implementation structures.

We are now half way in the implementation of the Cartagena Action Plan, and we need to critically review our progress towards those commitments. The discussion we have had today show that while some encouraging progress has

been made, there still is significant challenges left. Indeed several actors have expressed serious concerns of the lack of progress within this field, partly because they find that dedicated funding for mine victim assistance is on a downward trend. We take such concerns seriously. At the same time we would like to note that while dedicated mine victim funding is important, it is not the only international support being provided to victim assistance, as defined, for example in the Cartagena Plan.

Victim assistance involves a multifaceted response from a diverse set of institutional actors, both domestically and internationally. Norway is a state in a position to provide support for mine victim assistance, as required under Article 6, and we do so in a variety of ways. This includes substantial bilateral support to health and social services in states that also have mine victims, and multilateral support to relevant UN agencies, including the WHO, ILO and UNDP. This is support that not is labelled as "Mine Victim assistance" in official statistics, such as the OECD DAC codes, but that certainly will have bearings on the lives of mine victims and other persons with disabilities as well. Using dedicated mine victim funding as the decisive indicator for measuring support for victim assistance is not sufficient to capture the full picture.

While there is no doubt that mine victims all over the world and in particular in remote areas, do not enjoy their full rights, we are concerned that a message that the Convention has failed the victims simply is not correct. We would argue that the situation for the majority of mine victims is significantly better today than it was 15 years ago, primarily as a result of this Convention, and the following CRPD and the then the CCM.

Rather than focussing on the possible failures of this convention in providing mine victims their rights, we may benefit from initiating a discussion among ourselves on how the normative progress made possible by this Convention can be used for improving the lives of mine victims and other ERW victims, by taking the issues to other, equally relevant fora, such as the CRPD, the WHO and the ILO. Victim assistance, from first medical response, rehabilitation and full economic inclusion, is so important that it may benefit from being promoted on arenas that have health, employment, Human rights and development as their main competence.

Mr President

Norway has since the very beginning of this convention been an advocate for the centrality of victim assistance. We firmly believe that this Convention is about human beings first and weapons second. But we are concerned that if we are not able to bring our discussions on victim assistance into the broader arenas that the international community have established to address issues of Rights, employment, health and disabilities, we may fail the victims, in spite of our commitments.

Thank you.